

Week 10

Compulsory Voting

Thiago Nascimento da Silva

School of Politics and International Relations
The Australian National University

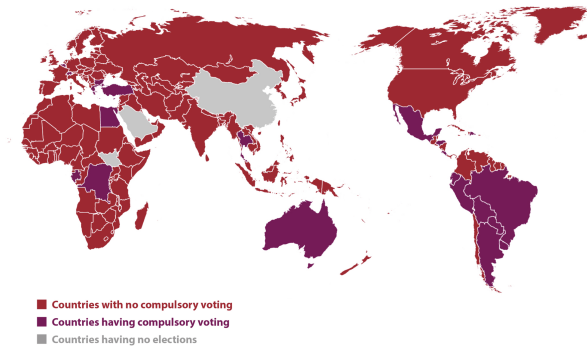
May 12, 2022

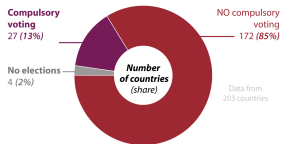
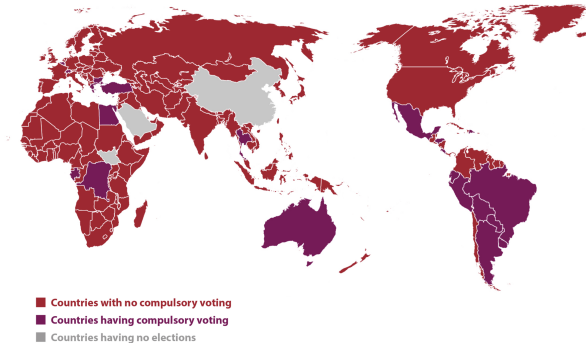


Compulsory Voting (Jackman 2001, Sheppard 2015)

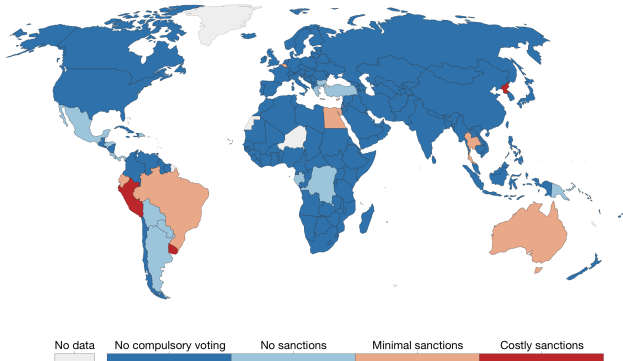
Compulsory voting describes the effect of (enforced and unenforced) laws that mandate at least attendance at a polling booth by enfranchised citizens, and in some cases mandate the casting of a valid ballot.

Those laws usually include the capacity for non-voters to be (strictly or weakly) sanctioned in case of no participation.





Source: Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA, 2016)



Source: V-Dem Dataset Version 8 (2018)

► Scale:

0 = No compulsory voting.

1 = Yes, but sanctions absent or not enforced.

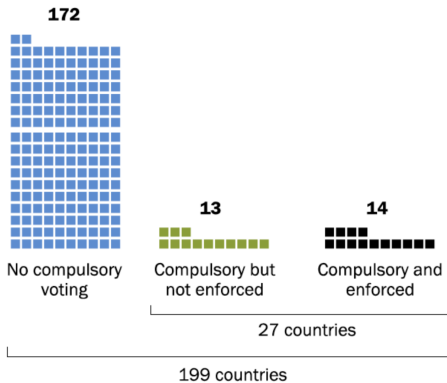
2 = Yes, sanctions enforced but minimal.

3 = Yes, sanctions enforced and costly.

Some countries where voting is no longer compulsory, but had a compulsory voting system in the past:

- ▶ Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Chile, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Italy, Netherlands, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Venezuela.

Number of countries that have ...

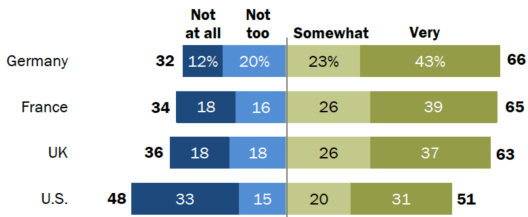


Note: Data evaluated for 199 countries that hold elections.

Countries in transition or with no data not shown.

Source: Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. Accessed May 2021.

% who say it is ___ important for the national government to make voting mandatory for all citizens



Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Fall 2020 Global Attitudes Survey. Q21a.

Are you in favor or against compulsory voting? Why?

Arguments in favor of compulsory voting:

- ▶ Voting as a duty;

Arguments in favor of compulsory voting:

- ▶ Voting as a duty;
- ▶ Institutional solution for low turnout;

Arguments in favor of compulsory voting:

- ▶ Voting as a duty;
- ▶ Institutional solution for low turnout;
- ▶ An incentive to become better informed;

Arguments in favor of compulsory voting:

- ▶ Voting as a duty;
- ▶ Institutional solution for low turnout;
- ▶ An incentive to become better informed;
- ▶ Elicit political engagement between citizens;

Arguments in favor of compulsory voting:

- ▶ Voting as a duty;
- ▶ Institutional solution for low turnout;
- ▶ An incentive to become better informed;
- ▶ Elicit political engagement between citizens;
- ▶ **Increases turnout among socioeconomically disadvantaged citizens;**

Arguments in favor of compulsory voting:

- ▶ Voting as a duty;
- ▶ Institutional solution for low turnout;
- ▶ An incentive to become better informed;
- ▶ Elicit political engagement between citizens;
- ▶ Increases turnout among socioeconomically disadvantaged citizens;
- ▶ Enhance the legitimacy (and trust) of political institutions among citizens;

Arguments in favor of compulsory voting:

- ▶ Voting as a duty;
- ▶ Institutional solution for low turnout;
- ▶ An incentive to become better informed;
- ▶ Elicit political engagement between citizens;
- ▶ Increases turnout among socioeconomically disadvantaged citizens;
- ▶ Enhance the legitimacy (and trust) of political institutions among citizens;
- ▶ *Depowering* political parties and empowering citizens.

Arguments against compulsory voting:

- ▶ Violation of individual freedom;

Arguments against compulsory voting:

- ▶ Violation of individual freedom;
- ▶ It increases poor decision-making;

Arguments against compulsory voting:

- ▶ Violation of individual freedom;
- ▶ It increases poor decision-making;
- ▶ It masks problems of democratic malaise;

Arguments against compulsory voting:

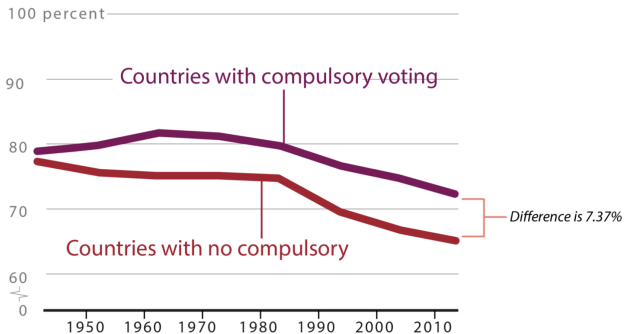
- ▶ Violation of individual freedom;
- ▶ It increases poor decision-making;
- ▶ It masks problems of democratic malaise;
- ▶ Lack of connection between electoral choice and policy change;

Arguments against compulsory voting:

- ▶ Violation of individual freedom;
- ▶ It increases poor decision-making;
- ▶ It masks problems of democratic malaise;
- ▶ Lack of connection between electoral choice and policy change;
- ▶ **Smaller parties do worse.**

Compulsory Voting and Voter Turnout

Compulsory Voting and Voter Turnout



Source: Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA, 2016)

- ▶ How compulsory voting alters the decision-making calculus of voters?
- ▶ **Spoiler:** Turnout rates depend on the level of penalties countries with compulsory voting impose for non-compliance.
 - ▶ Higher turnout rates when both the penalties and the likelihood of enforcement are high;
 - ▶ Lower turnout rate when both the penalties and the likelihood of enforcement are meaningless.

The “calculus of voting” (Downs 1957), later extended by Riker and Ordeshook (1968), consider a decision-making scenario represented in the formula:

$$R = pB - C$$

Where,

- ▶ R stands for “rewards,” i.e., the utility derived from the act of voting, being a function of:
 - ▶ B , the benefit received by the voter, derived from the *expected party differential*;
 - ▶ p , the probability of the vote being decisive, and;
 - ▶ C , the cost of voting (e.g., transportation, registration, standing in line, etc.)

- ▶ Under a **voluntary voting** system, the “calculus of voting” illustrates how the act of **voting is costly** and, in many cases, the cost of voting can exceed the cost of non-participation.
- ▶ Under a **compulsory voting** system, the “calculus of voting” illustrates how the act of **abstaining is costly** and, in many cases, the cost of abstention can exceed the cost of participation.

Panagopoulos (2008) conceives the cost of voting (C) as consisting of two parts:

- ▶ C_V : The cost of voting, and;
- ▶ C_{NV} : The cost of not voting.

Panagopoulos (2008) conceives the cost of voting (C) as consisting of two parts:

- ▶ C_V : The cost of voting, and;
- ▶ C_{NV} : The cost of not voting.

Therefore,

$$E[U(\text{Voting})] = pB - C_V.$$

$$E[U(\text{Abstain})] = -qC_{NV}.$$

- ▶ q is the cost's probability the voter can expect to pay for non-compliance.

Panagopoulos (2008) conceives the cost of voting (C) as consisting of two parts:

- ▶ C_V : The cost of voting, and;
- ▶ C_{NV} : The cost of not voting.

Therefore,

$$E[U(\text{Voting})] = pB - C_V.$$

$$E[U(\text{Abstain})] = -qC_{NV}.$$

- ▶ q is the cost's probability the voter can expect to pay for non-compliance.

As a consequence: **Rational voters should vote if $qC_{NV} > C_V$** , and;

The marginal impact of the penalty on turnout may depend on the degree of enforcement and vice-versa.

H1: Turnout in compulsory systems without meaningful penalties and enforcement should equal turnout in voluntary systems.

H2: Penalties and enforcement each increase turnout.

H3: Penalties and enforcement together increase turnout a beyond the effect of each individually (e.g., there is an interactive effect).

- ▶ Turnout data from elections in democratic countries during the 1990s.

- ▶ Turnout data from elections in democratic countries during the 1990s.
- ▶ Dependent variable:
 - ▶ The proportion of the voting age population that participated in elections in each country for each year covered.

- ▶ Turnout data from elections in democratic countries during the 1990s.
- ▶ Dependent variable:
 - ▶ The proportion of the voting age population that participated in elections in each country for each year covered.
- ▶ Independent variable *Penalty*:
 - 1 (low/no): No formal penalties for abstention;
 - 0 (moderate): Fines for noncompliance;
 - 1 (high): Fines in addition to other severe penalties (e.g., imprisonment or loss of certain civic rights).

- ▶ Turnout data from elections in democratic countries during the 1990s.
- ▶ Dependent variable:
 - ▶ The proportion of the voting age population that participated in elections in each country for each year covered.
- ▶ Independent variable *Penalty*:
 - 1 (low/no): No formal penalties for abstention;
 - 0 (moderate): Fines for noncompliance;
 - 1 (high): Fines in addition to other severe penalties (e.g., imprisonment or loss of certain civic rights).
- ▶ Independent variable *Enforcement*:
 - 1 (low/no): The country routinely fail to enforce sanctions for abstention;
 - 0 (weak): The country enforces penalties, but only weakly;
 - 1 (High): The country monitors compliance and enforce sanctions for abstention strictly.

Table 1 Compulsory voting in comparative perspective: severity of sanctions and degree of enforcement

Country	Sanctions	Enforcement
Argentina		
Australia		
Belgium		
Bolivia		
Brazil		
Chile		
Costa Rica		
Cyprus		
Dominican Republic		
Ecuador		
Egypt		
Fiji		
Gabon		
Greece		
Guatemala		
Honduras		
Italy		
Lichtenstein		
Luxembourg		
Mexico		
Nauru		
Paraguay		
Peru		
Singapore		
Thailand		
Turkey		
Uruguay		

Notes: Sanctions: Adapted by author from IDEA (2001) as follows: No/low, no formal sanction; Moderate, fine only; High, fine and additional sanction including possible imprisonment, civil rights infringements, or disenfranchisement.

Enforcement: Source: IDEA 2001. Excludes states in which mandatory voting laws apply only in certain regions or for certain offices (Switzerland, Austria, France) and states where compulsory voting laws were not in place in the 1990s or later (Philippines, Switzerland)

Table 1 Compulsory voting in comparative perspective: severity of sanctions and degree of enforcement

Country	Sanctions	Enforcement
Argentina	High	Weak
Australia	Moderate	Strict
Belgium	High	Strict
Bolivia	High	N/A
Brazil	Moderate	Weak
Chile	High	Weak
Costa Rica	No/low	No/low
Cyprus	Moderate	Strict
Dominican Republic	No/low	No/low
Ecuador	Moderate	Weak
Egypt	High	N/A
Fiji	High	Strict
Gabon	N/A	N/A
Greece	No/low	No/low
Guatemala	No/low	No/low
Honduras	No/low	No/low
Italy	No/low	No/low
Lichtenstein	Moderate	Weak
Luxembourg	Moderate	Strict
Mexico	No/low	No/low
Nauru	Moderate	Strict
Paraguay	Moderate	N/A
Peru	High	Weak
Singapore	High	High
Thailand	No/low	No/low
Turkey	Moderate	Strict
Uruguay	High	Strict

Notes: Sanctions: Adapted by author from IDEA (2001) as follows: No/low, no formal sanction; Moderate, fine only; High, fine and additional sanction including possible imprisonment, civil rights infringements, or disenfranchisement.
Enforcement: Source: IDEA 2001. Excludes states in which mandatory voting laws apply only in certain regions or for certain offices (Switzerland, Austria, France) and states where compulsory voting laws were not in place in the 1990s or later (Philippines, Switzerland)

- ▶ Argentina: Fine. In case of non payment, the person is barred from dealing with public bodies for one year.
- ▶ Australia: Requires non-voters to show up at polling stations and check their names off a list. For first-time offenders, a fine is issued for AU\$20 with a maximum penalty of AU\$180 which is regularly enforced.
- ▶ Belgium: Fines from 40 to 80, and up to 200 for reoffenders. However, the Belgian government has not enforced sanctions since 2003.
- ▶ Bolivia: The voter is unable to receive their salary from the bank if they cannot show proof of voting for the three months following the election.
- ▶ Brazil: In case of non payment for three consecutive elections, the person is barred from dealing with public bodies.
- ▶ Uruguay: Fines. In cases of non-payment the person concerned is barred from dealing with public bodies.

- ▶ Costa Rica: Voting is mandatory by law for all registered voters. However, those who do not vote face no penalties.
- ▶ Greece: Failure to vote is punishable by a prison sentence of one month to one year, and a loss of the offender's post. However, no one has ever been prosecuted.
- ▶ Honduras: While the Constitution says voting is compulsory, the Electoral Code does not mention penalties for not voting.
- ▶ Mexico: The Constitution mentions that voting is a citizen's obligation, but the Electoral Code does not establish penalties for not voting.

Table 4 Explaining turnout in compulsory voting systems (democracies), 1990s dependent variable: electoral turnout (Vanhanen 2000)

Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Penalty (-1 = No/low, 0 = moderate, 1 = high)	4.68*** (1.66)	5.19*** (1.48)	7.72*** (1.81)
Enforcement (-1 = No/low, 0 = weak, 1 = strict)	4.99*** (1.08)	7.40*** (1.35)	4.62*** (1.64)
Penalty × enforcement		8.53*** (1.49)	7.48*** (2.15)
GDP Growth (annual %, World Bank)			-1.05** (0.48)
Electoral system (1 = majoritarian, 2 = combined, 3 = proportional)			-1.67 (2.17)
Parliamentary system (parliamentary = 1, presidential = 0)			10.84*** (3.52)
Constant	47.02*** (0.73)	42.71*** (0.80)	44.52*** (6.23)
<i>N</i>	56	56	56
Adj. <i>R</i> ²	0.22	0.27	0.41

Notes: Linear regression with panel-corrected standard errors in parentheses

*** Estimated effect is $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, two-tailed tests

Source: Panagopoulos (2008).

- ▶ Compulsory voting per se does not necessarily impact turnout rate, **penalty and enforcement levels** of compulsory voting systems do.
- ▶ Mean levels of turnout in compulsory systems with no sanctions or no enforcement is similar to turnout levels in voluntary systems.
- ▶ Turnout rates are higher in systems in which sanctions are most severe and the likelihood of enforcement is strongest.

Compulsory Voting and Political Knowledge

Expectation: **Compulsory voting increases citizens' political knowledge.**

Why?

1. Once a voter incurs the cost of having to vote, he or she may choose acquire sufficient information to make the best use of their vote.
2. The act of voting—attending a polling station, receiving information from candidates and thinking at least superficially about whom to vote for—may impart incidental political knowledge.

- ▶ Data:
 - ▶ CSES Survey Modules;
 - ▶ 133 elections;
 - ▶ 47 countries;
 - ▶ From 1996 to 2013.

- ▶ Dependent variable:
 - ▶ Political knowledge: Counting an individuals' correct responses to fact-based questions.

Table 1

Elections in the comparative study of electoral systems (Modules 1 to 4) dataset, categorised by requirement to vote.

Compulsory: Strong enforcement	Compulsory: Moderate enforcement	Compulsory: Weak/no enforcement	Voluntary	
Australia 1996, 2004, 2007, 2013	Brazil 2006, 2010	Greece 2009, 2012	Albania 2005	Japan 1996, 2004, 2007, 2013
Uruguay 2007, 2009	Chile 1999, 2005	Mexico 1997, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012	Austria 2008, 2013	Kyrgyzstan 2005
Belgium (Flanders and Wallonia) 1999, Belgium 2003	Italy 2006		Bulgaria 2001	South Korea 2000, 2004, 2008
Switzerland (Schaffhausen only) 1990, 2003, 2007, 2011	Thailand 2001, 2007, 2011		Belarus 2001, 2008	Lithuania 1997
Peru 2000, 2001, 2006			Canada 1997, 2004	Montenegro 2012
			Switzerland (excluding Schaffhausen) 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011	Netherlands 1998, 2002, 2006
			Czech Republic 1996, 2002, 2006	Norway 1997, 2001, 2005
			Germany 1998, 2002, 2005, 2009, 2013	New Zealand 1996, 2002, 2008, 2011
			Denmark 1998, 2001, 2007	Philippines 2004
			Spain 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008	Poland 1997, 2001, 2005, 2007, 2011
			Estonia 2011	Portugal 2002, 2005, 2009
			Finland 2003, 2007	Romania 1996, 2004
			France 2002, 2007, 2012	Russia 1999, 2000, 2004
			Great Britain 1997, 2005	Serbia 2012
			Croatia 2007	Slovakia 2010
			Hungary 1998, 2002	Slovenia 1996, 2004, 2008
			Ireland 2002, 2007, 2011	Sweden 1998, 2002, 2006
			Israel 1996, 2003, 2006	Taiwan 1996, 2001, 2004, 2008, 2012
				Ukraine 1998
				United States 1996, 2004, 2012

*Hong Kong and Iceland studies excluded due to lack of available Polity IV data.

Source: Sheppard (2015, p. 303).

Variable Scores and Distributions from CSES 1-4 Modules

Variable	CSES measure (recoded as applicable)	Code	Mean	SD
<i>Political knowledge items</i>				
Correct	Correct answers to A2023-5, B3047_1-3, C3036_1-3, D3025_1-3	Count: 0 to 3	1.36	1.09
Incorrect	Incorrect answers to A2023-5, B3047_1-3, C3036_1-3, D3025_1-3	Count: 0 to 3	0.64	0.84
'Don't know'	'Don't know' answers to A2023-5, B3047_1-3, C3036_1-3, D3025_1-3	Count: 0 to 3	0.48	0.72
<i>Compulsory voting items</i>				
Strongly enforced	Dummy created from A5031, B5037, C5044_1, D5044_1	1 = Yes 0 = No	0.10	0.30
Moderately enforced	Dummy created from A5031, B5037, C5044_1, D5044_1	1 = Yes 0 = No	0.07	0.25
Weakly enforced	Dummy created from A5031, B5037, C5044_1, D5044_1	1 = Yes 0 = No	0.03	0.16
Voluntary voting	Dummy created from A5031, B5037, C5044_1, D5044_1	1 = Yes 0 = No	0.81	0.39
<i>Country-level controls</i>				
Polity IV	C5050_1, D5051_1; Modules 1 and 2 data sourced from Polity IV website. Scores scaled by +10 to remove negative integers.	20 = full democracy 0 = Autocracy	18.75	2.87
Days since election held	A2026, B2032, C2032, D1029	Count of days	50.45	70.85
<i>District-level controls</i>				
District magnitude	A4001, B4001, C4001, D4001	Count of seats in district	19.48	40.38
<i>Individual-level controls</i>				
Party identification	Recoded from A3004, B3028, C3020_1, D3018_1	1 = Yes 0 = No	0.48	0.50
Age	A2001, B2001, C2001, D2001_Y (subtracted from year of survey)	Age in years	45.88	18.02
Gender (male)	A2002, B2002, C2002, D2002	1 = Male 0 = Female	0.50	0.50
Household income (standardised)	A2012, B2020, C2020, D2020 A2003, B2003, C2003, D2003 (standardised within module to account for different coding across modules)	z-scores	0.94	0.35

Source: Sheppard (2015, p. 306).

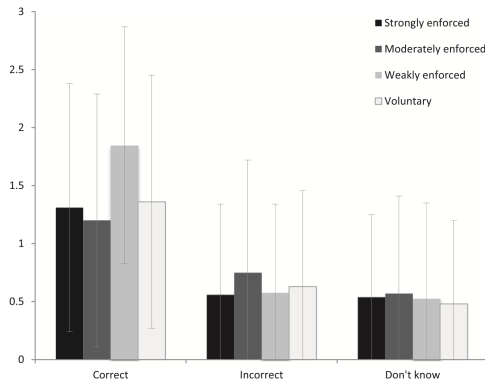


Fig. 1. Mean responses by enforcement level. Independent samples t-test: Between-group (e.g. strongly enforced or other, moderately enforced or other, etc) differences are all significant at 0.00. Error bars represent 95% confidence interval.

Source: Sheppard (2015, p. 304).

Table 2

Linear mixed effects model of political knowledge.

	B	SE
<i>Country-level</i>		
CV (strong)	0.245	0.061
CV (mod)	-0.322	0.289
Polity IV	0.046	0.029
Days since election held	-0.003	0.000
<i>District-level</i>		
District magnitude	0.003	0.000
<i>Individual-level</i>		
Party ID	0.152	0.006
Age	0.008	0.000
Male	0.296	0.006
Education	0.675	0.010
Household income	0.079	0.002
Constant	-0.864	0.572
Election (intercept)	0.306	0.553
Mode of interview (intercept)	0.091	0.301
Residual	0.714	0.884

Linear mixed effects model fit by maximum likelihood estimation (LME4 package). n = 101,557, number of elections = 65. Missing values excluded listwise. Voluntary voting systems excluded as referent category.

Source: Sheppard (2015, p. 304).

Table 3

Linear mixed effects model of interactions between education and level of enforcement of compulsory voting.

	B	SE
<i>Country-level</i>		
CV (strong)	0.304	0.067
CV (mod)	-0.196	0.290
Polity IV	0.046	0.029
Days since election held	-0.003	0.000
<i>District-level</i>		
District magnitude	0.003	0.000
<i>Individual-level</i>		
Party ID	0.151	0.006
Age	0.296	0.000
Male	0.313	0.005
Education	0.696	0.011
Household income	0.080	0.002
Education*CV (strong)	-0.055	0.026
Education*CV (mod)	-0.181	0.035
<i>Constant</i>	-0.883	0.572
Election (intercept)	0.305	0.552
Mode of interview (intercept)	0.091	0.301
<i>Residual</i>	0.766	0.875

Linear mixed effects model fit by maximum likelihood estimation (LME4 package).
n = 101,557, number of elections = 65. Missing values excluded listwise.

- ▶ Compulsory voting from the perspective of political parties (e.g., party competition, party mobilization vs. conversion);

- ▶ Compulsory voting from the perspective of political parties (e.g., party competition, party mobilization vs. conversion);
- ▶ Compulsory voting and representation of minorities (e.g., ethnic vote);

- ▶ Compulsory voting from the perspective of political parties (e.g., party competition, party mobilization vs. conversion);
- ▶ Compulsory voting and representation of minorities (e.g., ethnic vote);
- ▶ Compulsory voting and corruption (e.g., vote buying);

- ▶ Compulsory voting from the perspective of political parties (e.g., party competition, party mobilization vs. conversion);
- ▶ Compulsory voting and representation of minorities (e.g., ethnic vote);
- ▶ Compulsory voting and corruption (e.g., vote buying);
- ▶ Compulsory voting and economic outcomes (e.g., redistributive policies);

- ▶ Compulsory voting from the perspective of political parties (e.g., party competition, party mobilization vs. conversion);
- ▶ Compulsory voting and representation of minorities (e.g., ethnic vote);
- ▶ Compulsory voting and corruption (e.g., vote buying);
- ▶ Compulsory voting and economic outcomes (e.g., redistributive policies);
- ▶ **Compulsory voting and economic voting.**

► **Thursday, 19 May.**

Week 11. Ethnicity and Identity

Compulsory readings:

- Hangartner, Dominik et al. 2019. “Does exposure to the refugee crisis make natives more hostile?” *American Political Science Review* 113 (2): 442–455.
- Wasow, Omar. 2020. “Agenda seeding: How 1960s black protests moved elites, public opinion and voting.” *American Political Science Review* 114 (3): 638–659.
- Mable, William, Mousa, Salma, and Siegel, Alexandra. 2021. “Can Exposure to Celebrities Reduce Prejudice? The Effect of Mohamed Salah on Islamophobic Behaviors and Attitudes.” *American Political Science Review*, 1–18.